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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: SEPTEMBER 16, 2009

Summary: Reports on national political developments dominated headlines in all major newspapers on Wednesday. All newspapers front-paged the demand made by Chaudhary Nisar, Opposition leader in the National Assembly, that an explanation be provided about former President Musharraf's reported 'exit deal.' Newspapers also highlighted Musharraf's refutation of "misusing" American military aid. The English daily, "Dawn," ran a joint statement of the U.S. senators - McCain, Lieberman and Graham warning that an "American defeat in Afghanistan would further destabilize Pakistan." Reports of "killing of 16 militants in different military operations in FATA and Swat valley" also received extensive coverage.

Most major newspapers ran editorials on the tragic death of several women in a stampede in Karachi as well as Musharraf's safe exit deal. However, some dailies commented on the U.S. plan to engage militants near the Pak-Afghan border and the recurring drone attacks in that region. Commenting on the ongoing "military operation," the second-largest, nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" observed that "this is regrettable that in pursuit of the obedient role in the war of the U.S. interests even the sanctity of Ramadan had not been considered and the military operation was continued despite local Taliban's voluntary ceasefire." However, the independent national English daily "Dawn" noted that "defeating militancy along the Pak-Afghan border will require close cooperation between the governments and security forces of both sides." Whereas, the pro-Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" wrote: "The U.S. has wasted \$800 billion in a futile adventure, which resulted in the killing of millions of innocent people and growing poverty among its own citizens." End Summary.

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News Stories  
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"President Must Come Clean On Musharraf Deal" "The News" (09/16)

"The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) on Tuesday demanded of President Asif Ali Zardari to apprise parliament and the nation of the deal arranged by international powers with him which resulted in 'safe passage' for Pervez Musharraf, as revealed by the president a day earlier. Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, talking to reporters in his chambers in the Parliament House in Islamabad on Tuesday, termed the statement of President Zardari about safe passage to Musharraf as being violative of national sovereignty."

"U.S. Aid Not Misused: Musharraf" "Dawn" (09/16)

"Former president Gen. (Retd) Pervez Musharraf on Tuesday denied saying that while he was in power, he allowed using U.S. military aid to Pakistan to strengthen its defenses against India. In a statement issued in Philadelphia, Mr. Musharraf said the issue highlighted by some Indian leaders and media was not even raised in the interview."

"U.S. Responds Cautiously To Musharraf's Statement" "Dawn" (09/16)

"The U.S. State Department has reacted cautiously to an alleged statement by the former president Pervez Musharraf that Pakistan has used American military aid to strengthen its defenses against India. 'This is former president who has made these allegations ... But simply we don't have the details to be able to respond to the allegations,' State Department spokesman Ian Kelly told journalists in Washington."

"America's Defeat To Destabilize Pakistan: U.S. Senators" "Dawn" (09/16)

"Three powerful U.S. senators - John McCain, Joe Lieberman and Lindsey Graham - warned on Tuesday that an American defeat in Afghanistan would further destabilize Pakistan. In a joint statement issued by their offices, they urged the Obama administration to use 'decisive force' to defeat the extremists operating in the Afghan-Pakistan region."

"Jets Strafe Bajaur; 16 Militants Killed" "The Nation" (09/16)

"Security forces on Tuesday killed 16 more militants in different operations in FATA and Swat Valley. Fighter jets targeted suspected hideouts of militants in Bajaur. Search operation was continuing in Swat and Malakand Division, according to ISPR update."

"Changes In Law Planned To Curb Terror" "Dawn" (09/16)

"The government is introducing major changes to the anti-terrorism law to give sweeping powers to law-enforcement agencies and courts to effectively deal with militancy and terrorism, sources told 'Dawn.' 'We are living in a changed environment. The new environment has thrown some new challenges and it has emerged that the existing anti-terror law is inadequate and too weak to deal with the new challenges,' a senior official said."

"Three Militants Killed" "Dawn" (09/16)

"Three militants were killed during an exchange of fire between security forces and militants in Mangaltan area of Charbagh tehsil on Tuesday."

"Six Taliban Camps Destroyed In Hangu" "Dawn" (09/16)

"The security forces blew up six camps of Taliban after entering into Chappri Naryab area of Hangu district on Tuesday night."

"Taliban Destroy Medical Facility in Hangu" "Daily Times" (09/16)

"Taliban blew up a basic health unit in Hangu district on Tuesday, police and local sources told reporters."

"Militant Leader, Sons, Supporters Surrender" "The News" (09/16)

"A militant commander, along with his two sons and other supporters, surrendered to security forces in the Charbagh area of the Swat Valley, while three insurgents were arrested from Matta bazaar on Tuesday."

"Taliban Create New Stronghold" "The News" (09/16)

"The security agencies have found out that after erosion of the Swat, Buner and Salarzai strongholds the Taliban have amassed on the hard terrain between Batkhela and Jalala on the Mardan-Swat Highway, and that is from where they perpetrate with the kind of suicide attacks one of which was thwarted at Thana in Swat the other day."

"Taliban Reject UN Ceasefire Offer" "The News" (09/16)

"Rejecting the United Nations ceasefire offer on the occasion of Eid

and World Peace Day, the Taliban on Tuesday said the world body should force foreign countries to withdraw their troops from Afghanistan if it was interested in peace in the war-ravaged country."

"Pledges Made To Pakistan Should Be Honored" "Dawn" (09/16)

"Lyn Pascoe, UN Under-Secretary General of political Affairs, said in a press conference on Monday that it was important to ensure that donor countries followed through on their pledges of money for strengthening 'democratic Pakistan.'"

"Blasphemy Accused Found Dead In Jail" "Dawn" (09/16)

"Tension gripped Sialkot, Daska, Sambrial and Pasrur after a young Christian man who was arrested on blasphemy charges was found dead inside his jail cell on Tuesday. Jail Superintendent Ishtiaq Lodhi claimed that the accused, Robert alias Fanish Masih, being kept in solitary confinement, had committed 'suicide' in his cell. But his relatives and members of the Christian community refused to accept the jail authorities' claims and alleged that he was tortured to death."

"Iran Suspicious Of U.S. Embassy Expansion" "The Nation" (09/16)

"Following the footsteps of China, Iran has also expressed reservations over the increasingly expanding U.S. presence in the region and called for concerted efforts by the Muslim Ummah to counter U.S. designs, 'The Nation' has reliably learned on Tuesday."

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Editorials/Op-eds  
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"Military Operation And Drone Attacks," an editorial note in the second-largest, nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (09/16)

"It is regrettable that in pursuit of obedience to U.S. interests, even the sanctity of has Ramadan not been considered and the military operation has continued despite the local Taliban's voluntary ceasefire.... The military operation and drone attacks are causing the death of more or less 15 citizens every day. Why do we have to continue with this bargain of loses.... The government has given green signal to the army for the military operation in Waziristan. The entire country might be engulfed in the American war mongering like Afghanistan and Iraq if the American orders continue to be implemented.... The rulers should see reason and should pull themselves out of this war of American interests. The military operation should be stopped and jirgas for peace, in keeping with the tribal traditions, should be held."

"Pak-Afghan Border," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (09/16)

"If the U.S. does go ahead with a plan to engage militants near the Pak-Afghan border from the Afghan side, it will fulfill a long-standing demand of the state here for more to be done on that side.... Increased activity by American troops along the border runs the risk of 'hot pursuit' into Pakistani territory, a possibility that would escalate tensions. Worse, if clear red lines are not drawn beforehand, we could see a repeat of the controversial U.S. raids, some aborted or repelled, in the Waziristan agencies in September 2008. Unilateral action by the Americans inside Pakistan would be a diplomatic and political disaster. Even joint military actions would be fiercely opposed inside Pakistan and are untenable. So the Americans must stay sensitive to Pakistan's internal political and security dynamics, or else risk creating an even bigger mess.... Defeating militancy along the Pak-Afghan border will require close cooperation between the governments and security forces of both sides. Ignore that fact and the militants will be the only winners."

"Drone Threat," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (09/16)

"It is unfortunate that U.S. drone attacks have increased their

frequency during the month of Ramadan and will probably continue into Eid as well. The U.S. has shown no concern for the sensitivities of ordinary Pakistanis who are also falling prey to these drone attacks. For every militant killed, more than triple the amount of innocent Pakistanis also die. But that is just so much 'collateral damage' to the U.S.... It is time to alter the dynamics with the U.S. and a beginning needs to be made with the elimination of the drones."

"U.S. Must Take Care Of Its Domestic Economy," an editorial in the Karachi-based, pro-Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (09/16)

"According to a recent report issued by the U.S. Census Bureau, the poverty ratio has increased during the last five years due to the surging economic depression and, at present, 40 million American citizens are living in abject poverty. The U.S. provides billions of dollars to other countries every year in the name of financial assistance and loans while this report presents the other side of the picture. The question arises why 40 million people are living in poverty in the U.S., a country which provides hefty economic aid and loans to almost the entire world? The answer may be simple and easy to comprehend: the U.S. is reaping the fruits of the atrocities it is committing across the world and the current economic depression serves a divine warning for America. The U.S. has wasted \$800 billion in a futile adventure which resulted in the killing of millions of innocent people and growing poverty among its own citizens."

"Musharraf's Not So Great Exit," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (09/16)

"There is nothing wrong, in our specific case, in having 'foreign stakeholders' who usually end up securing us against our excesses. All populist decisions taken by our governments brought us nothing but poor results. This is not to say that Musharraf was some great savior. Neither was he a great strategist, as was proved by Kargil and his covert support of the Taliban; he was also no man of his word. He may be safe from the hangman's noose but he will not be able to play golf in Pakistan for a long time."

"President's Iftar-Dinner," an editorial in the Lahore-based independent Urdu daily "Din" (cir. 5000) (09/16)

"Giving safe passage to former president Pervez Musharraf is not the common man's problem. The common man wants Pervez Musharraf to be present in Pakistan during hearing of petitions against him for taking anti-public and anti-constitution measures. Even the right to give safe passage to him rests only with the judiciary, in light of the decisions on petitions against him."

"Safe Exit," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (09/16)

"To the surprise of no one, President Zardari has admitted that a 'safe exit' was engineered by international powers.... If the PML-N really does want to see Mr. Musharraf tried it should take up at the earliest the government's offer and table a parliamentary resolution calling for Mr. Musharraf's trial. Let Parliament vote on the issue and if it decides to call for Mr. Musharraf's trial, let the chips fall where they may.... But there are also more pragmatic reasons to avoid a fresh political crisis. The country is faced with myriad problems, none of which will be solved or mitigated by trying Mr. Musharraf. More crisis-solving and less crisis-creation, then, is clearly the demand of the times."

"Can't We Resolve The 'Deal' Through Parliament?," an editorial in the country's premier business newspaper, "Business Recorder" (cir. 25,000) (09/16)

"President Zardari's remark that the guarantors included 'all international and local powers, which have stakes in South Asia' obviously brings to mind the role the United States must have played, cashing in on the good offices of Saudi Arabia, to clinch the deal. It would be too naive to think that the Americans engineered Musharraf's ouster for the sake of democracy in Pakistan! They needed sustained Pakistani support in its war on terror which given dictator Musharraf's dwindling popularity was no more

possible."

"Twisted Honor," an editorial in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (09/16)

"Deals have done little to make Pakistan a more stable or more prosperous place. Indeed, by damaging democracy and giving a green signal to dictators of the future to do just what Musharraf did, they have harmed this cause. The trial of a former military chief could have served to persuade the army of the desirability of steering clear of political power. It now seems this message is not to be sent out. The fact that President Zardari has spoken out about the Musharraf deal raises further issues.... Our political leaders must take a long, hard look at themselves and determine where their loyalties lie."

"Pakistan to Dealistan," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (09/16)

"The admission of this deal has not come as a surprise to the Pakistani nation which had assumed it had been short changed once again by its elected leaders and their foreign allies. As we are losing sovereignty on other fronts, with a virtual American invasion of Pakistan, we have also lost control of our political system. The people may hanker after democracy and often give their lives for it, but for the ruling elite democracy is just a means of entering the corridors of national power - only to barter away the nation to external interests. So we have seen deals brokered by either the U.S. and Britain or Saudi Arabia, sometimes perhaps all three together, to bring leaders into power, take away leaders into exile, and provide safe passage to others. The people of Pakistan may vote, but it is the external actors and their deal-making prowess with the local leaders that decide who will rule and how they will rule. So it should not surprise anyone that our rulers adopt policies suited to their foreign deal guarantors."

"Displacements," an editorial in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (09/16)

"There is continued anticipation that soon an operation will need to be launched in the Waziristan area which remains the main stronghold of the militants. This would of course mean yet another humanitarian crisis as people flee the area. The unrest that simmers on in other agencies means too that it is not necessarily from Waziristan alone that people will be displaced. It is important to prepare for such an event. Stories being told by the people of Swat increasingly reveal the extent of their suffering.... A strategy to deal with future displacements must now be drawn up so that the worst sufferings can be averted."

"Obama's UNSC Nuclear Agenda," an op-ed by Shireen M. Mazari in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (09/16)

"The UN Security Council is to meet on September 24 in a session to be chaired by President Obama. The focus will be on arms control and disarmament, specifically within the nuclear context.... So, if the Obama Administration really wanted to zero in on the security factor in the nuclear domain, it would have focused more on nuclear safety and less on nuclear terrorism - which, while it can never be eliminated as a concern, is not rationally a viable one at present. However, it does have abundant political mileage which the U.S. and its allies never tire of exploiting. All in all, it is unfortunate to see Obama's electoral rhetoric on nonproliferation dissipate so quickly - just as his rhetoric on the so-called war on terror has slipped into Bush gear! With such a hostile and discriminatory nonproliferation draft resolution before it, what will Pakistan's stance be? Will Haqqani push the U.S. agenda as always or will the FO hold its ground in the absence of its Secretary? Will our rulers make us victims of yet another deal? We shouldn't hold our breath."

(All circulation figures are based on estimation)  
Patterson